



**For Immediate Release
November 10, 2004**

**Draft Environmental Assessment Document for Monument Valley, Arizona,
Legacy Management Project Site Available for Public Comment**

(Grand Junction, CO)— The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management in conjunction with the Navajo Uranium Mill Tailing Remedial Action Program announces the availability of the draft *Environmental Assessment of Ground Water Compliance at the Monument Valley, Arizona, Uranium Mill Tailings Site*. The draft *Environmental Assessment* provides information concerning the potential effects of the proposed ground water compliance strategies for the Monument Valley LM Project site.

The Monument Valley LM Project site is a former uranium ore-processing facility located on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona, about 15 miles south of Mexican Hat, Utah, and about 13 miles east of the Monument Valley tribal park. Contaminated surface materials at the site were removed in 1994 and disposed of in the Mexican Hat disposal cell. However, ground water at the site is contaminated as a result of historical uranium ore-processing activities.

The three aquifers present at the Monument Valley site are: the alluvial (uppermost) aquifer, the underlying Shinarump aquifer, and the deeper De Chelly aquifer. Of these, only the alluvial and De Chelly aquifers show evidence of site-related contamination. Approximately 540 million gallons of alluvial ground water are contaminated with nitrate, sulfate, and uranium. Of these, uranium is found in only a small isolated area, and nitrate is the contaminant of primary concern. The proposed compliance strategy for sulfate and nitrate in the alluvial aquifer is passive remediation through phytoremediation (the uptake of contaminants, such as ammonia and nitrate, into plants), and natural flushing. Natural flushing is also proposed for uranium in the shallow areas of the alluvial aquifer.

For the deeper portions of the alluvial aquifer, natural flushing is proposed for sulfate and nitrate and uranium. Before implementing the proposed compliance strategies, DOE will conduct pilot studies to determine the feasibility of using passive remediation or a combination of passive and active remediation to comply with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards. If the pilot studies conclude that natural flushing alone is insufficient in the deeper areas of the alluvial aquifer,

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DOE would employ an active remediation system, which would involve installation of extraction wells and pipelines to pump ground water from deeper portions of the aquifer to the fenced-in areas. This active method is referred to as land farming.

Uranium is the only constituent of concern in the De Chelly aquifer, and elevated concentrations are present in only a small, localized area. The proposed compliance strategy for the De Chelly aquifer is passive remediation through natural flushing.

In conjunction with the selected compliance strategies, DOE will implement institutional controls and ground water monitoring for both aquifers. Institutional controls protect public health and the environment by limiting access to a contaminated medium.

Reference copies of the draft *Environmental Assessment* will be placed in the Flagstaff Coconino Public Library, Burton Barr Central Library (Phoenix), Tuba City Public Library, Navajo Nation Library System, Cortez Public Library, Dine' College Library, Dine' College Library Shiprock Branch, the University of New Mexico-Gallup Library, Mexican Hat Elementary School Library, Monument Valley High School, Shiprock AML Program Office, Tuba City AML Program Office, Kayenta Chapter House, Oljato Chapter House, and Dennehotso Chapter House. A copy will also be available in the DOE Public Reading Room in Grand Junction, Colorado, and on the Navajo UMTRA website at <http://www.navajoaml.osmre.gov/>. Copies may be requested by contacting DOE toll free at 1-800-399-5618, or the Navajo Nation AML/UMTRA office at 1-800-871-6982. Any public comments on the draft *Environmental Assessment* should be forwarded to the address below no later than December 17, 2004:

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